

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6087  
DOUGLAS ROBERTS/BEIRUT

AUGUST 15, 1978

## LEBANON'S MANY CONFLICTS

ANNCR:

MORE THAN A YEAR AND A HALF AFTER LEBANON'S CIVIL WAR WAS SUPPRESSED, THAT SMALL COUNTRY REMAINED THE SCENE OF MANY CONFLICTS. V.O.A.'S DOUGLAS ROBERTS EXAMINES SOME OF THESE IN THIS REPORT FROM BEIRUT.

VOICE:

IT WAS A TYPICALLY HOT AND SULTRY SUMMER MORNING, AND JUST AS TYPICALLY, THERE WAS MORE BLOODSHED TO REPORT IN THIS STRIFE-TORN SEASIDE CAPITAL. A NINE-STORY APARTMENT BUILDING NEAR A PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP HAD BEEN TOTALLY DEMOLISHED IN A THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION THAT LEFT AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED DEAD. IN THE AFTERMATH, THERE WAS LITTLE TO INDICATE THAT A BUILDING HAD EVER BEEN THERE -- A HUGE CRATER, PILES OF JAGGED CONCRETE SLABS AND TWISTED METAL, A FEW ARTICLES OF CLOTHING SCATTERED OVER THE LOT WHERE WORKMEN MANNING BULLDOZERS WERE DIGGING THROUGH THE RUBBLE WITH OCCASIONAL GRUESOME HALTS WHEN THE BODY OF A MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD WAS UNCOVERED.

A RADICAL PALESTINIAN GROUP HAD OFFICES IN THE BUILDING, AND PREDICTABLY, THERE WAS IMMEDIATE SPECULATION THAT THE BLAST WAS THE WORK OF A RIVAL, MORE MODERATE FACTION. AS IT TURNED OUT, THE RIVAL FACTION ALSO HAD OFFICES IN THE BUILDING. THE, SUSPICIONS TURNED TO SO-CALLED ISRAELI AGENTS OR PERHAPS YET ANOTHER PALESTINIAN GROUP. NO ONE REALLY KNOWS AND NO ONE IS EVER LIKELY TO KNOW FOR SURE.

FOR MOST BEIRUTEES, SUNDAY'S EXPLOSION WAS JUST ANOTHER IN THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SERIES OF BLOODY INCIDENTS THAT HAVE PLAGUED THE CITY AND LEBANON AS A WHOLE EVER SINCE THE CIVIL WAS

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FORMER PREMIER SAED SALEM SAYS THE OTHER MAIN FACTOR IS THE CONTINUATION OF INTER-ARAB CONFLICTS ON LEBANESE SOIL. THIS IS FREQUENTLY REFLECTED IN GUN FIGHTS BETWEEN RIVAL PALESTINIAN GROUPS, SOME CLOSELY ALLIED WITH IRAQ AND OTHERS SUPPORTED BY SYRIA.

STILL, ANOTHER CONFLICT IN THE TANGLED WEB OF CONFRONTATIONS HERE IS NOW FOCUSSED ON THE SMALL HILLSIDE VILLAGE OF KAUKABA IN SOUTHEAST LEBANON, WHERE A UNIT OF THE FLEDGLING LEBANESE ARMY HAS BEEN PINNED DOWN BY THREATS AND OCCASIONAL ARTILLERY FIRE FROM RADICAL CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN ALL BUT TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON ISRAEL.

THIS COUNTRY BRISTLES WITH GUNS, ARTILLERY AND HOT-HEADED YOUNG MEN READY FOR BATTLE AND CONSPIRACY. AND WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY OF LEBANESE SEEM WAR-WEARY AND EAGER FOR A NEW LIFE, THERE IS LITTLE THEY CAN DO TO STOP THE BLOODSHED. MOST HOPE THERE WILL BE NO MORE MAJOR CONFRONTATIONS, BUT THERE ARE VERY FEW OPTIMISTS HERE. IN FACT, SAID ONE MODERATE WHO HAS JUST SENT HIS WIFE AND CHILD OUT OF THE COUNTRY, ONE CAN NEVER BE SUFFICIENTLY PESSIMISTIC IN LEBANON.

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